

# 2013 Tippecanoe County Prosecutor's Office in the News

**January 12, 2013: Lafayette Journal and Courier**

## **Admission of murder includes no appeal; victim was grandfather**

SOPHIA VORAVONG; [svoravong@jconline.com](mailto:svoravong@jconline.com)

An Indianapolis man faces 61 to 115 years in prison after admitting that he killed his 84-year-old grandfather, William Hartlep of Lafayette, on Oct. 12, 2011, by strangling his neck with an extension cord and slashing his throat with a knife.

The grandson, 39-year-old Richard F. Fouts, pleaded guilty Friday morning in Tippecanoe Circuit Court to murder in Hartlep's death and to burglary and being a habitual offender in an unrelated break-in Oct. 11, 2011, at a home on Alabama Street.

Fouts is scheduled to be sentenced March 3 by Judge Don Daniel.

Under a plea agreement with the Tippecanoe County prosecutor's office, Fouts cannot appeal his sentence, and additional charges of felony murder, robbery while armed with a deadly weapon and theft could be dropped.

Investigators allege that Fouts went to his grandfather's home at 2213 Meadow Drive, off South 18th Street near Jefferson High School, and woke him up to ask for money. Hartlep, however, refused and asked Fouts to leave.

A family friend found Hartlep's home ransacked later that day.

The elderly man, a World War II veteran, was a well-known resident of his Edgelea neighborhood, often spotted outside in his motorized scooter, where he waved at passers-by.

Hartlep's death had remained unsolved until Fout's arrest in February 2012. Detectives got their break after collecting DNA samples from Hartlep's family members to be used for reference and elimination against the evidence.

Fouts admitted Friday to initially tying up his grandfather using duct tape. When asked by his attorney, Tom O'Brien, how Hartlep was killed, Fouts paused for several seconds before quietly replying, "I strangled him and cut his throat."

Hartlep was found lying in a pool of blood on his kitchen floor.

Investigators suspect that Fouts ransacked the home to make it appear like a robbery. According to court documents, drawers had been removed, furniture had been moved and numerous items were strewn throughout. A safe in a closet also had been opened.

Fouts, however, did admit to taking coins that he thought were dollar coins. But they turned out to be commemorative coins from TRW, a Lafayette factory where Hartlep worked for many years.

The habitual offender sentencing enhancement is due to Fouts' extensive criminal history, which dates to 1991 and includes convictions for theft, burglary and forgery in Tippecanoe and Warren counties and South Carolina.

## **Indianapolis man admits killing 84-year-old grandfather**

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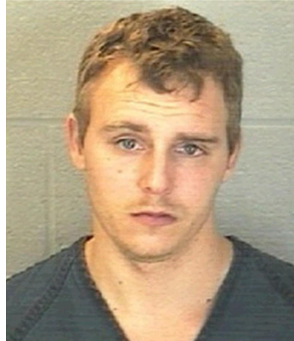
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Casey Lee Kimbrell, 17, of Lafayette was charged today as an adult for Dealing in and Possession of a Schedule IV Controlled Substance (Class C and Class D felonies). Kimbrell was in possession within 1,000 feet of McCutcheon High School in Tippecanoe County.

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**January 4, 2013: Lafayette Journal and Courier**

## **Homicide suspect pleads to lesser charges in Rogers killing If judge agrees, murder charge could be dropped; a Feb. 15 sentencing date set**



SOPHIA VORAVONG; [svoravong@jconline.com](mailto:svoravong@jconline.com)

This time around, Jeremiah Thompson has opted to not take his chances before a second jury on accusations that he was involved in the April 8, 2010, shooting death of 21-year-old Kory D. Rogers.

Thompson, 28, of Reelsville, had been slated to stand trial beginning Tuesday in Tippecanoe Superior Court 1 on charges that included felony murder, conspiracy to commit robbery, conspiracy to commit burglary and attempted theft.

It would have been Thompson's second trial. His first, held over seven days in August, ended because jurors could not reach unanimous verdicts.

On Thursday morning, Thompson pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery and conspiracy to commit burglary, which were both Class A felonies, according to Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington.

Under a plea agreement, the additional charges — that includes the lead count, felony murder, along with lesser offenses such as attempted theft — could be dropped when Thompson is scheduled for sentencing Feb. 15.

And if Judge Randy Williams accepts the plea, Thompson will face only 20 to 35 years in prison. Murder alone is punishable by 45 to 65 years in prison.

Meanwhile, Thompson's co-defendant, 32-year-old Edward C. Zaragoza of Moorsville, is serving a 120-year prison sentence after a jury convicted him last summer of felony murder, murder, being a serious violent felon in possession of a handgun and seven other charges.

Rogers was fatally shot in chest in the basement apartment of his sister's house at 2200 Ottawa Drive, near Jefferson High School on Lafayette's south end.

Prosecutors alleged that Thompson and Zaragoza were after a large sum of cash and marijuana that Rogers, a suspected drug dealer, had stolen from his supplier in mid-March of 2010, a few weeks before his death.

Neither suspect knew Rogers, but investigators and prosecutors relied heavily on cellphone technology and statements from their acquaintances to piece together the case, according to evidence and testimony presented during their respective trials.

Zaragoza, who is the husband of Thompson's cousin, repeatedly denied these claims.

Thompson's guilty plea Thursday jibed with what investigators had been saying all along. He admitted to hatching a plan with Zaragoza, which involved using force to rob Rogers of cash and marijuana, Harrington said.

No one could remember seeing Zaragoza or Thompson in Tippecanoe County on April 7 or April 8, 2010. But investigators caught a break after finding a receipt for the Economy Inn on those dates.

Though an Economy Inn employee could not identify him, Zaragoza signed in using his real name. The employee, however, could only remember there being two men and did not remember Thompson.

### **January 4, 2013: TCPO**

John "Jake" Venters was sentenced today to 19 years for his role in the vehicle accident that killed Brandon Stansberry.

The Court sentenced the Defendant to 8 years on Count XIII: Reckless Homicide, Class C Felony (FC); enhanced by 11 years on Count XIV: Habitual Offender. The Defendant will have 18 years executed at DOC and 1 year suspended (supervised probation).

### **January 4, 2013: WLFI TV**

## **Guilty plea in connection with Rogers murder**

Dan Klein

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WLFI) - A Putnam County man pleaded guilty to his role in a 2010 Lafayette murder case.

Tippecanoe County Prosecutor Pat Harrington said Jeremiah Thompson, 30, of Reelsville, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery and conspiracy to commit burglary charges Thursday. In exchange, seven other charges including murder will be dropped in connection with the April 2010 shooting of 21-year-old Kory Rogers on the 2200 block of Ottawa Drive.

In August 2012, Edward Zaragoza was sentenced to 120 years in prison for his role in the murder.

That same month, Thompson went to trial. But it ended in a hung jury.

With the plea deal, Thompson faces 20 to 35 years in prison and avoids a new trial that was set to begin next week. A sentencing hearing is set for Feb. 15 at 1:30 p.m.